

JUN 17 2021



From the desk of:  
*Andrea Salinas*  
State Representative Andrea Salinas



Oregon AFSCME Council 75 Urges your "YES" vote on HB 2359

Health care interpreters are vital to ensure people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) are able to communicate in settings that range in complexity and intimacy, whether in a health care provider's office or a community meeting. To ensure that people with LEP receive quality language access services, all health care interpreters must be qualified or certified throughout this state.

**HB 2359 closes the current loophole by requiring interpretation services to work with certified or qualified health care interpreters registered with the health care interpreter registry maintained by the Oregon Health Authority.**

According to the Oregon Nurses Association (ONA) *"When patients are unable to understand their condition and treatment options due to a lack of translation, they are less likely to comply and more likely to experience avoidable complications. This delay in treatment increases costs related to disease progression, wasted prescriptions, work-related absences, additional provider visits, or potential hospitalization"*. Removing the loophole requires that interpretation services utilize certified or qualified healthcare interpreters, ensuring further protections for interpreters and patients alike.

**HB 2359 directs the Oregon Health Authority to work with the Oregon Council on Health Care Interpreters to design a program providing free or low cost training to ensure the qualification and certification of health care interpreters.**

There is a great need for certified and qualified health care interpreters in Oregon. A state-wide survey conducted by the Oregon Health Care Interpreters Association in late 2020 found that 93.55% of respondents caring for limited language proficient patients required health care interpreters. Providing free or low-cost training to interpreters ensures qualification and certification for more languages in Oregon: making the health care system more accessible.

**HB 2359 requires health care providers to provide interpreters PPE at no cost to the interpreter.**

*"Language minorities, who are predominantly immigrants and people of color, have a higher risk of developing COVID-19. Working with interpreters who don't have PPE exacerbates that risk. Because contract interpreters travel between different hospitals and clinics, one interpreter without PPE could potentially spread COVID-19 to many different locations. That's just one of many examples of vulnerable communities without adequate protections facing unnecessarily heightened levels of risk during this pandemic. We must do better."* - Felicity Ratway, Certified Health Care Interpreter, Oregon

**Please help raise the standards of Oregon's health care interpretation services by voting "YES" on HB 2359**

